Facts about Seattle City Light's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Program

How much GHG must City Light emit?
City Light estimates that the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by utility operations and purchased generation is equivalent to about 200,000 metric tons of carbon-dioxide. That's about what 44,000 cars would emit annually.

Generation sources account for about 95% of the total. The rest comes from operations, such as operating vehicles, heating buildings, and chemicals that insulate electrical equipment.

How does City Light address its greenhouse-gas emissions?
First, City Light avoids emissions to the extent possible through conservation programs and purchasing renewable energy from sources like the Stateline Wind Project. Then, it purchases greenhouse-gas emissions offset from other organizations that have the ability to reduce their emissions more economically that City Light could.

Where do City Light's geenhouse-gas offsets come from?
Biodiesel: City Light funds the use of biodiesel in several local fleets, including buses, garbage hauling equipment and City vehicles. Gallon for gallon, biodiesel production and combustion creates fewer greenhouse gas emissions compared to petroleum diesel. Fleets use a blend of biodiesel and petroleum diesel.

Shore Power: Seattle City Light buys offsets from Princess Cruise ships that have switched from using diesel to using electricity while docked at Seattle's waterfront. This also reduces air pollution in Seattle

Cement Substitutes: City Light is also buying offsets from the Climate Trust. These offsets are created when substitute material, such as fly ash or steel slag, which might otherwise go to landfills, is used to replace cement in concrete. Use of these substitutes greatly decreases greenhouse-gas emissions in the concrete-making process.

These three programs account for about 50,000 metric tons of offsets.

Du Pont: City Light has just added 300,000 metric tons of offsets from Du Pont Fluorchemical. The greenhouse gas in question is created in the manufacture of a refrigerant called Freon. Du Pont has developed a method to capture and destroy the greenhouse gas emitted during this manufacturing process.

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So has City Light achieved its "net-zero" greenhouse gas goal?
Yes, for the year 2005. City Light estimates its emissions in 2005 will be about 200,000 metric tons. Between the 50,000 metric tons of offsets already under contract and the recently purchased 300,000 metric tons of offsets, City Light as 350,000 offsets.

Why did City Light buy more greenhouse-gas offsets than its 2005 emissions?
The utility got a very good price on high quality, verifiable offsets, and now has enough to cover 2005 emissions, even if emissions are more than estimated. And City Light can apply any excess to 2006.